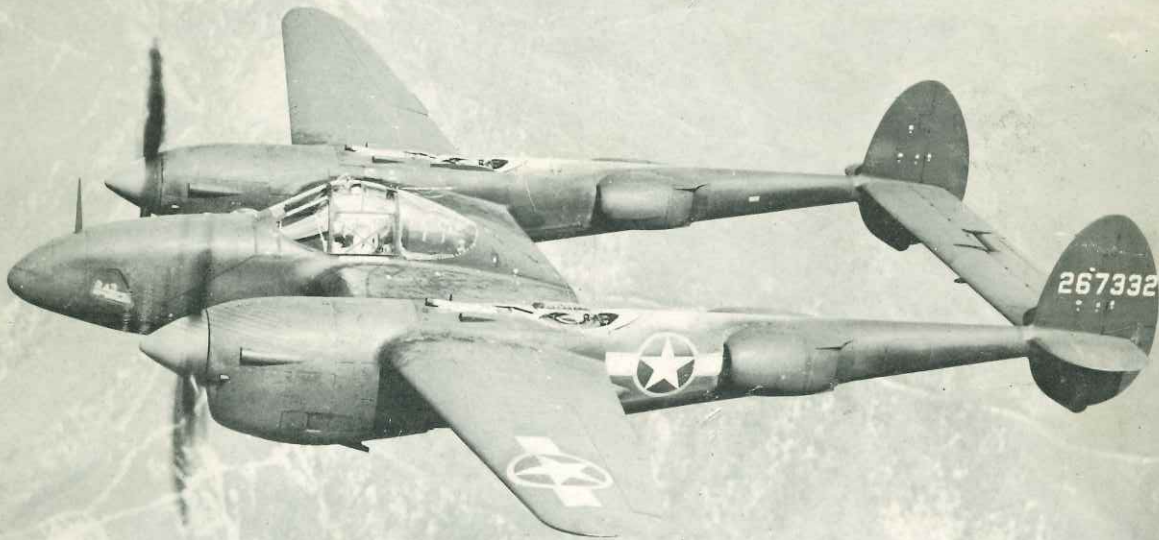


VOL.2
No.5 1969

AIR COMBAT

1939·1945



SPECIAL U.S. FIGHTERS ISSUE

- AIR WAR OVER N. W. AFRICA
- PIONEER MUSTANG GROUP

85 CTS

AIR COMBAT

VOLUME 2 NUMBER 5

1939-1945

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In our next issue

THUNDERBOLTS OVER IE SHIMA
AIR WAR OVER N. W. AFRICA—PART 2

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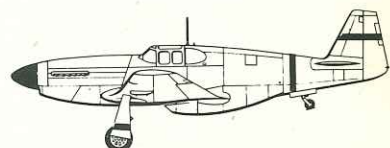
Front cover: Camera plane poses for camera . . . Lockheed F-5B-1, one of ninety built, shows, like its brother the famous Lightning, to best advantage in flight.

Lt. Lowell Brueland's "Grim Reaper" of the 354th Fighter Group is appropriately named considering the Group's record. More on those Pioneering Mustang Pilots may be found starting on page 143.



Frontline, 1944: A Lightning has just returned from an operational flight. While pilot takes a quick break and prepares for his next mission, crew chief Archer and armorer Simpkins clean the barrels of the still warm guns. Moments later, the graceful Lightning will take to the air again.
U. S. Air Force Photo 52886AC.

Editor's Talk



This verse appeared in an Army Air Force newspaper during the war years. We would like to thank its author for recording this bit of nostalgia.

TO THE FIGHTERS

There's many a toast to the Bombers
That shuttle the lethal might,
So here's glasses high to the Fighters,
Who escort them on the flight.
Darting amongst the vapor trails,
slicing through rockets and flak,
Quick to accept or challenge fight
From enemy fighter pack

We like to think of the Fighter
As a daring, tenacious thing
With speed and grace of a humming bird
That packs a cobra sting!
Of blazing guns and dogfights
Contesting grit and skill,
With utter contempt for danger,
Circling in for the kill!

We like to think of the victories,
The double and triple score!
But let's not forget the Fighter's might
Is that, and something more!
We know they pack a lightning punch
To quench an avenger's thirst,
But above and beyond the lust to score,
"The Bombers and Target come first!"

So when you appraise the Fighter,
Think first of the duty he fills
As the armored escort to Bombers,
Then thrill all the more at the kills;
Knowing they've brought the Bombers back
You'll affix their "Fighter Score"
As sort of a plus to their regular job,
It's duty . . . and something more!

Cpl. Ellsworth B. Laurence



AIR WAR OVER N.W. AFRICA



JACK H. KAUFFMAN · 1

Editor's note:

The beginning of U. S. fighter operations in North Africa was in stark contrast with the highly efficient fighter force which operated at the closing stages of the war. Pioneering in the deadly game of air war, U. S. fighter groups nevertheless were able to operate with some success at a time when air support was badly needed to bring about the removal of the Axis Forces from African territory. Poorly equipped, inexperienced, U. S. fighter groups nonetheless started their game in earnest supporting Montgomery's Eighth Army. Learning fighter tactics, operating methods and general survival in the bloody sands of the desolate African terrain from the experienced Royal Air Force, these groups later became part of a larger force which supported the costly landings in Sicily and Italy.

The hardships of living under desert conditions were offset by the enthusiasm of the green but curious newcomers. The novelty of capturing enemy equipment, the discovery of a new continent, its people and cities made life exciting. The selected few, who served in this campaign, still tell us their stories full of enthusiasm.

The 79th Fighter Group was typical of the early U. S. fighter operations in the wastelands of North Africa.

THE P-40s OF THE 86TH FIGHTER SQUADRON

The 79th Fighter Group was formed at Bradley Field near Windsor Locks, Connecticut in the spring of 1942. State-side training lasted throughout this summer. In October we were moved to Grenier Field, N. H., for staging. Our planes were shipped to Lagos, British Gold Coast in Africa and we followed by Pan American.

After two weeks of assembling and checking out our aircraft, we flew across central Africa and down the Nile to Alexandria where we received some more training. There we practiced ground gunnery by having a target plane fly low over the desert while other ships made passes at the target ship's shadow on the sand. Before moving into combat as a group, we were sent to the 57th Group to fly combat with experienced pilots. In January of the next year we began operations near Dara, then from Tripoli we moved to Causeway where we saw heavy action before, during and after the battle at the Mareth Line. Here the Germans desperately tried to hold Montgomery's 8th Army.

From the Mareth Line we continued via Falonnerie to Kairouan in Tunisia and from there we flew as far north

as Bizerte and Cape Bon.

Here we escorted bombers attacking the island of Pantellaria which surrendered eventually as a result of these bombardments. Shortly after the Allied landings in Sicily, we moved to Syracuse for a short period of time and then continued to Caltegrone, Sicily.

Here we flew three missions a day to bomb the Messina Straights where the Germans were ferrying men and supplies back to Italy night and day. It was from Caltegrone after about 120 combat missions that I was sent back to the States in September of 1943. The 79th Fighter Group moved on to Foggia, Italy.

THE PLANES



PLANES AND PEOPLE



"... A more motley appearing gang of men on the move could not be found. British battle jackets and trousers were worn by many, while others had swapped items with their Australian mates in Egypt and wore huge brimmed hats in real Aussie style. Jerry shoes were a popular item of footgear in lieu of worn-out American shoes. The 66th Squadron, which was in our area, was jokingly called the '66 gypsies'..." The haberdashers in nearby Alexandria made a small fortune in selling uniforms, hats and footwear. Often these items were 'obtained' from military warehouses and supply dumps. The picture above is typical of the casual dress worn by members of the 86th.



"... Disaster struck when I was happily cruising along, ferrying a new plane to our base. The weather was great and it was early in the morning. Suddenly, a hydraulic line, controlling the pitch, burst. Dirty black oil was thrown over the entire windshield and canopy. Not having any forward visibility, I decided to bring her in while judging my height and position from the side. Down I went... almost in the middle of a flock of sheep! When I got out of the plane I was surrounded by utter silence. Except for the sheep, not a living soul was to be seen. Then, eight or ten nomads appeared from nowhere. Slowly, they walked toward me. Fortune was with me; they turned out to be friendly. After spending most of the day with the nomads, sharing their water, a British patrol appeared from over the horizon taking me back to my outfit..."

PLANES AND EQUIPMENT



"... The Cape Bon area was a scrounger's paradise as the retreating German and Italian forces left their equipment scattered about. Soon, everyone was driving around in enemy vehicles, from banged-up trucks to luxurious staff cars. Jerry generators were humming in the camps supplying power for German made radios. It was amusing to tune to the Berlin radio station and hear Axis Sally condemning the Desert Yanks..."

Photos on this page show some of the typical equipment in use, such as the Opel Kapitän and a "found" British fuel truck above, while below a useful Mercedes scout car received the dubious P-40Y-uc "Captain, Sir!" designation.





" . . . Our pilots were briefly assigned to another group already operating for some time in this area. We in the 86th Squadron were flying alongside the men of the 66th. This way we became familiar with typical desert operations. Airfields, for instance, were simply marked off with gasoline drums placed at four corners of a level area. Dust presented a never ending problem with our equipment. . ."

Contrary to the beliefs of many that most desert aircraft were finished in flat paints, we see the Squadron Commander's ship reflecting the hot desert sun. A few dust storms, however, eliminated the glossy surface within a very short time.

FIFTEENTH AIR FORCE COMBAT MARKINGS 1943-1945

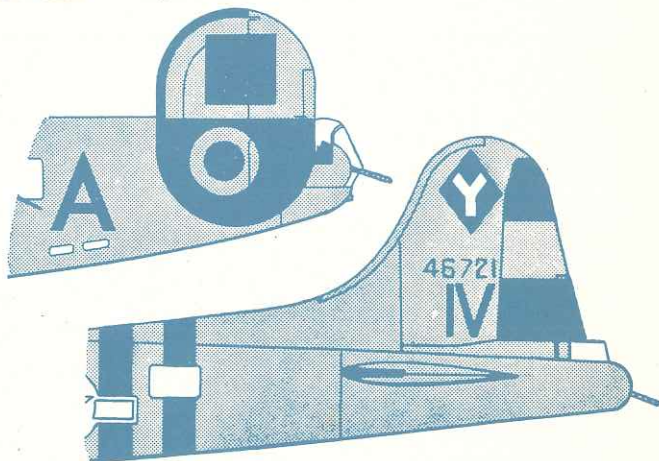
Combat Markings is available from
Beaumont Aviation Literature, 11 Bath
Street, London. E. C. 1, England.

Also available from Eagle Aviation,
P. O. Box 82, Rockaway, N. J. 07866.

Price for this unique publication is
\$1.95 postpaid and money back
guarantee.

Now available from Eagle Aviation, the history of the 15th Air Force markings in detail and color. Filled with fine drawings and photographs, this volume which is published by Beaumont, England, is now distributed for the first time in the United States. This excellent large size, 28 page publication, written by E. A. Munday, gives a comprehensive study of the colorful markings of the 15th Air Force.

136 Highly recommended for the collector.



The machine in top picture has evidently just been delivered to the Group. There are no tactical markings or unit identification numbers. Ground crew prepare the ship for Group Acceptance.

Below is another early arrival. Here again no unit markings are evident. Slightly different configurations between the two Warhawks, both F Models, are visible.



Scoreboard of the 86th Squadron. Many interesting names appear in this line up.

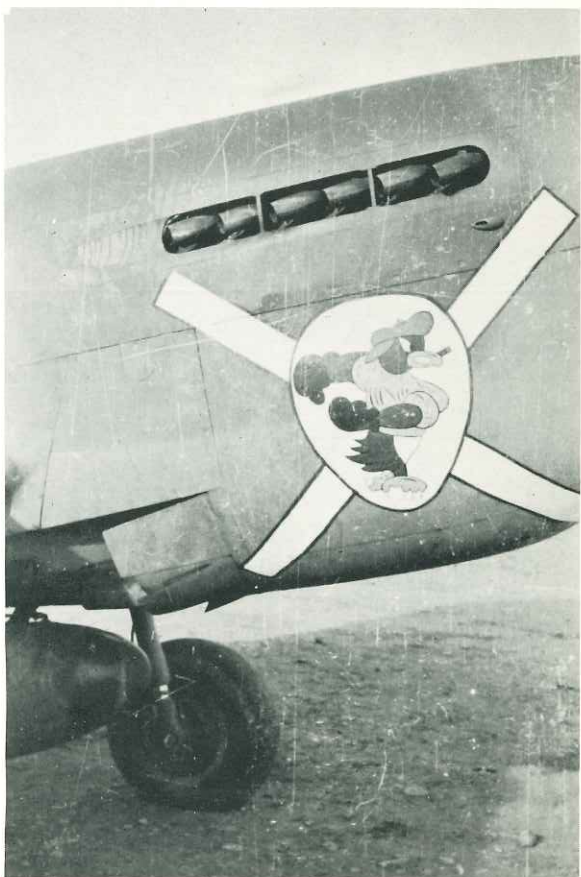
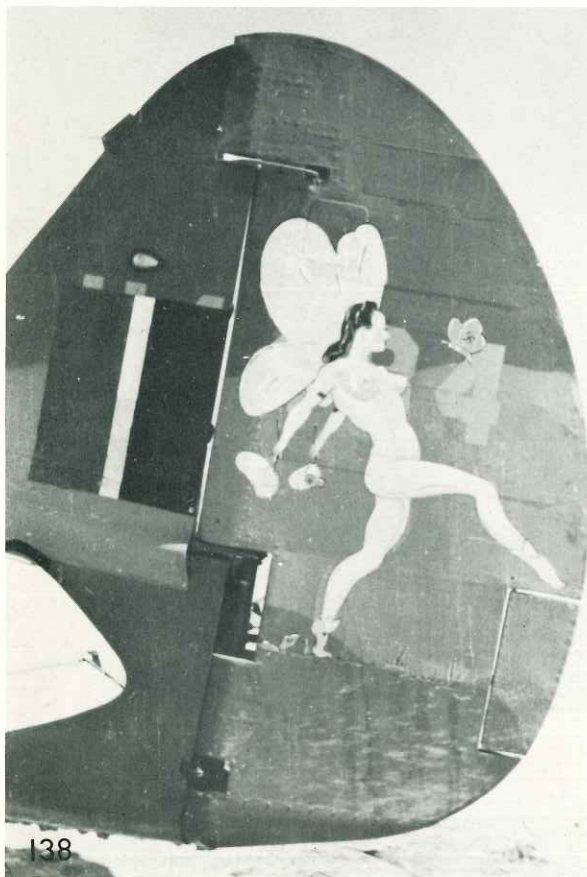
Although six were never to return, several others became distinguished for various deeds. Highest scoring Fred Borsodi, ex-race car driver and test pilot, crossed, together with Pete Bedford, the Atlantic in a captured German bomber to be delivered to Wright Field. Fred is also credited with photographing shock waves of a P-51 in flight. Unfortunately, Borsodi's career was cut short while demonstrating the first U. S. jet in England in the latter part of the war.

86th Squadron

ME: TH WATKINS*
BOO ALLARD
TERRY BAILEY
PETE BEDFORD**
DAVE BROWN
FRED BORSODI***
JACK CHAMBERLAIN
CHARLEY CUMBERLAND
BOB FULLER
BOB GUILLEBEAU
JACK GIMBLETON
BILL HANSON*
GEO HARRIS
CLIFF HUTT
JACK KRIEFMAN*
JOHN KELLY*
JOE KELLY

*KILLER KENT
OBE LEATHERMAN
CHUCK LOWNCES
DANNY MAYER
DON MCKAY
TOM MCCARTY
MAXIE MAXWELL
BOB MINETT
DICK MORRISSEY
JIM REUTERSHAN
BOB SPURGIN
HENRY STEELE
BILL TAYLOR
BARNEY TURNER
ART WELDON
WAYNE RHYMARD
GEO EWING

PLANES AND MARKINGS



"... Taking up a brand new Warhawk one day, I got myself into deep trouble when trying to switch over to another fuel tank. Although I was warned about the change in the tank switch position on this particular model, once up in the air I goofed . . . The engine sputtered, quit and down I went. Not much damage though, nevertheless my pride was hurt.

I made up for this on a mission which took us from Kairouan to the Cape Bon area. It was a beautiful clear spring morning. A hospital ship, apparently loaded with fuel according to Intelligence, was off the coast. This was to be our target. We all carried 500 pound bombs and when we were ready to dive towards our rather strange target, a swarm of 109s jumped us. Dropping our bombs as fast as we could we scrambled in all directions. Suddenly I found myself face to face with a deadly 109. In a circle we went, chasing one another. I managed to turn inside, pulled the trigger and just followed the tracers. The 109, belching black smoke, turned over on its back, its pilot falling clear. Down the 109 went, from 12,000 feet straight into the Mediterranean. I was very surprised to see my wingman, 'Tiger' Taylor, nicely tucked behind my wing, a position he stayed in during my 'mad' dogfight . . ."

PLANES IN ACCIDENTS



Photo bottom: Trying to make a "soft" emergency landing alongside the beach, this Warhawk, nevertheless, made quite a mess of itself . . .

Series on the left: The famous Tail markings of the 79th Fighter Group. At least the location of the always present plane-mates is original. To present the Group in a better light, beauties were removed before moving to Sicily.

Bottom photo right shows the mascot of neighboring 66th Squadron, better known as the Exterminators.





Huddled together in a circle, in the stillness of the mysterious Tunisian nights, local natives often engaged in long conversations which, for Western ears at least, sounded like an uninterrupted litany of ababa . . . ababa ababa . . . Inspired by these strange sounds Lt. Kauffman's ship was christened accordingly.

Lt. Dave Brown and his crew chief pose in front of their Warhawk. Mission markings, the names Dorothy and Miss Killcat II, are painted on fin and rudder.



"Friends, Foes and Visitors" will be our second installment in this series. The pictures on the left and right are typical of what will be featured; German and Italian aircraft, R. A. F., visiting VIPs, etc.

Last, but not least, to satisfy hundreds of requests for color, a great color shot of a Fw190 in desert setting will adorn our front cover!



Lieutenant Jack Kauffman's Warhawk undergoing maintenance. Sand played havoc with the delicate mechanisms of the aircraft and armament. Engine overhauls and replacements were an absolute necessity to keep the planes combat ready.



Recommendations

For the World War 2 German Aviation Enthusiast . . .

"The Luftwaffe War Diaries" by Cajus Bekker. A fine account by a German about the Rise and Fall of the Luftwaffe. Many interesting photographs, as well as extensive charts and maps of air operations. The tragic story of the Stalingrad airlift, victories over the North African desert, the courage of the pioneering night fighters in defense of their country — both British and German. K. H. Miska.

For the Naval Aviation enthusiast of World War 2 . . .

"The Fast Carriers" by Clark Reynolds. It is a book for the tactician, technician and historian alike. Mr. Reynolds tells the story of the American Fast Carrier Task Force as it rose from the ashes of Pearl Harbor and cut a swath through the Pacific ready to invade the Japanese home islands had it become necessary. Well illustrated, excellent biography and maps detailing the epic battles of the Pacific. K. H. Miska.

Our announced feature for this issue, "Thunderbolts over Ie Shima" has been postponed to our next issue. We ran a little short of space due to increased coverage of the two main articles in this number.

We also apologize for running a little behind schedule with the last few issues. We are working hard to correct the situation.

IN THE NEWS:

Among the ninety-nine aircraft, taken out of storage for use in Vietnam in the past year, nine **Douglas C-47** transports were included. Looks like the old reliable bird can't stay away from the battlefield . . .

Retired from active duty recently, the aircraft carrier **USS Essex** is now moored in the Boston Naval Shipyard. The Essex steamed almost a quarter of a million miles during the second World War and earned no less than 13 battle stars. 15 shipmates were killed when hit by a Kamikaze plane in 1944. She was out of action for only half an hour.

Lt. General Frank A. Armstrong, whose daring daylight raid on German-occupied territory in France in 1942 inspired the book, movie and television series "12 O'clock High", died on August 20 in Tampa, Florida. Armstrong led the first U. S. daylight bombing raid over Rouen-Cotteville, France. The General also flew numerous missions during the summer of 1945 over Japanese oil targets while commanding the 315th Bomber Wing. In November of the same year he made the first non-stop flight from Honshu, Japan, to Washington, D. C. in a Superfortress.

Lt. General George E. Stratmeyer, the former commander of the Air Defense Command and commander of the Army Air Force in China during World War 2, died on August 11. The General was a firm believer in the importance of air power and was one of the handful of airmen who began the Army Air Force and saw it expand into the greatest fighting force in the world.

Someone had to do it . . . A Grumman F8F Bearcat, a plane first produced in the waning days of World War 2, has officially set a **world's speed record** for propeller-driven piston engine airplanes in two sets of runs at Edwards Air Force Base. Darryl Greenamyer, flying the highly modified Bearcat officially broke the thirty year old record of 469.22 miles per hour set by Fritz Wendel in 1939 flying an equally highly modified Messerschmitt 109R. Greenamyer, a Lockheed test pilot, averaged 483.04 miles per hour on August 16. Modifications of the aircraft included shortening of the wings, removal of the hydraulic system, installation of a Skyraider prop and a P-51H spinner.

No serious problems were encountered, although a cracked exhaust stack raised the cockpit temperature to an uncomfortable 150 degrees F. and Greenamyer had to wear

gloves to be able to control the aircraft. The generator also failed due to overheating.

His reward was the speed record, certified by the Federation Aeronautique Internationale. Greenamyer intends to take one more whack at the National Air Races before retiring the plane.

Gerry Zijlstra, our Dutch editor, tells us about the **uncovering of a B-17** in one of the many 'polders' in Holland. The plane, which was shot down by German fighters over Twente on the 11th of January in 1944, was a radar ship assigned to the 482nd Bomb Group.

In the wreckage, recently brought to the surface, a camera loaded with film was found.

Immediately the film, which was under water for over 25 years, was processed. To the surprise of doubtful skeptics part of this film produced pictures taken over the target area. One of the pics shows another B17 probably flying over the city of Halberstadt.

With some luck we may be able to obtain this extremely rare historical photograph for publication in *Air Combat* . . .

From a press release from Malmo, Sweden:

A former German test pilot says Adolf Hitler planned to send an experimental plane to bomb New York at the end of the war but advancing Allied forces spoiled the scheme. Hans Pancherez, once a test pilot for the Junkers Aircraft Company, told of the plan in an interview with the newspaper *Arbetet*. Pancherez said the first prototype of the craft, called Junkers Ju 390, was ready in early 1944 and a successful non-stop test flight was made between Germany and Cape Town in South Africa. The former test pilot said plans called for the plane to fly from Bordeaux, France to New York, drop its bombs, and return to France. Two of these long range bombers without bomb load succeeded in the first reconnaissance flight over New York. Planes, operating at high altitude, took photographs of Manhattan.

Following the recent release of the movie "**The Battle of Britain**" and the publication of the book "**Dowding and the Battle of Britain**", the drive is on to honor and recognize 87 year old Lord Hugh Dowding.

As Fighter Command's Commander in Chief, Lord Dowding is credited with leading the British fighters to victory against the Luftwaffe during the summer of 1940. Two months after the victory, however, Lord Dowding fell out of favor in a dispute over air strategy and was relieved of his position. Now, almost three decades later, a campaign has begun to honor the war hero by promoting him to full Marshal status, a rank reserved for only the most distinguished.

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354TH FIGHTER GROUP:



PIONEER MUSTANG GROUP

— LT. COL. RICHARD E. TURNER —

As its adopted name implies, "**Pioneer Mustang Group**", the 354th Fighter Group was the first to take the P-51 Mustang into continuous operational combat against the enemy. This fortuitous event was occasioned by the fact that our Group arrived in the E. T. O. for combat operations at the same time that the Mustang made its debut in November, 1943. Although assigned to the Ninth Air Force, the 354th was placed under operational control of the Eighth which was in urgent need of the Mustang's long range capability for target support of its heavy bombers. The Eighth's heavy bombers were penetrating deeper and deeper into enemy territory beyond the practical support range of the P-47 fighter escort, then used by the Eighth Fighter Command.

Due to this unique arrangement, the 354th Fighter Group was cast adrift unintentionally in a sort of limbo as far as records and publicity were concerned. It was aggressively active, however, in heavy escort operations while under the Eighth Air Force command, as its subsequent record attests.

During the eight months prior to the invasion, when the 354th reverted back to Ninth Air Force operational control, the Group amassed the bulk of its eventual record of 701 aerial kills. In addition, 255 aircraft were destroyed

on the ground for a grand total of 956 aircraft. The Group produced 39 confirmed aces with only 61 pilots lost. This figure includes operational accidents as well as enemy action.

Editor's note: The narrative history of the part played by the 354th Fighter Group will be available soon to the public in more active detail as seen through the eyes of one of its original pilots, Lt. Colonel Richard E. Turner, who has an autobiography covering its combat history. It is scheduled to be released in book form by Doubleday this month, October 1969, under the title: "**Big Friend, Little Friend**".





MAJOR R. J. BROOKS — 4.5 VICTORIES



On this page and the following page we show several variations of Lt. Col. Turner's aircraft. In reference to the aircraft's name Lt. Col. Turner writes us the following:

"... The story of the naming of my Mustang "Short Fuse Sallee" later shortened to "Short Fuse", transpired as follows: When I left the U. S. for my first combat tour in 1943, I became more or less engaged to a lovely young lady I had attended college with prior to joining the Air Corps who was named Sallee.

I naturally named my plane Sallee, but added the black bomb with a short fuse to indicate to all enemy fighters the nature of our reaction if they dared mess with any "Big Friends" under our care. A bit cocky, but remember I was in the tender twenties.

After I returned home following my first combat tour I found the young lady and I had less in common than we had supposed during the highly emotional period prior to my first departure for combat. Hence, when I returned to my Group for my second overseas tour, I deleted the name Sallee in deference to the new status of our relationship which has melted to friendship. . ."

"... I had at least five different aircraft assigned during my tenure with the 354th Fighter Group. None were lost to combat action, but I wore out two or three from hard usage. The picture without the short fused bomb was a very early one before we got the distinctive personal touches on our aircraft, about the first or second month after our arrival in the E. T. O."



Lt. Colonel Richard E. Turner in front of his first Mustang. Photo was taken shortly after arriving in England.



Ground personnel proudly pose in front of the last of the series of Mustangs flown by Richard Turner. "Short Fuse" became the new name after he returned for his second tour. Certainly one of the most colorful Mustangs around!



FRANK O'CONNOR — 10.5 VICTORIES



LIEUTENANT DICK HUGHES

LIEUTENANT GEORGE W. HALL

LIEUTENANT B. W. CARR — 14 VICTORIES



On this page we find some of the typical breed of pilots of the 354th. Through their efforts the Group became top scoring unit in aerial combat in the E. T. O. and third in "total enemy aircraft destroyed". Only the 56th and 4th Fighter Groups exceed in the "total" figure. Table on the right shows the figures for aerial combat kills only. 148



"... Lt. Colonel 'Turk' Techner came to us from another Group to fill the Deputy Group Commander's slot after we had been in combat for a few months. He is now retired, I believe, as a Colonel. ..."

ACES OF THE 354TH FIGHTER GROUP

1 Eagleston G. T. 20.5	21 Reynolds R. 7
2 Beerbower D. 15.5	22 Rogers F. M. 7
3 Bradley J. T. 15	23 Koenig C. W. 6.5
4 Brueland L. K. 14.5	24 Welden R. D. 6.25
5 Carr B. W. 14	25 Emmerson W. 6
6 Dahlberg K. H. 14	26 Gross C. K. 6
7 Emmer W. N. 14	27 Gumm C. F. 6
8 Howard J. H. 13	28 Simmons W. J. 6
9 Stephens R. W. 13	29 Bickel C. G. 5.5
10 Turner R. E. 12	30 King W. B. 5.5
11 Frantz G. M. 11	31 Long M. G. 5.5
12 O'Connor F. 10.5	32 Shoup R. L. 5.5
13 Dalglish J. B. 9	33 Miller T. F. 5.25
14 Overfield L. J. 9	34 Fisk H. E. 5
15 McDowell D. 8.5	35 Martin K. R. 5
16 Hunt E. E. 7.5	36 Ritchey A. J. 5
17 Lamb G. M. 7.5	37 Rose F. 5
18 Lasko C. W. 7.5	38 Rudolph H. S. 5
19 Goodnight R. E. 7.25	39 Ashbury R. W. 5
20 Anderson W. Y. 7	* from 363rd F. G.

TOP FIGHTER GROUPS IN ETO BASED ON AERIAL VICTORIES ONLY.

RANK	FTR GROUP	AERIAL KILLS
FIRST	354th	701
SECOND	56th	677
THIRD	357th	575
FOURTH	4th	539
FIFTH	352nd	493
SIXTH	355th	362
SEVENTH	78th	327
EIGHTH	353rd	320
NINTH	55th	304
TENTH	339th	249

Note: All statistics authority
8th and 9th Air Forces. E. T. O.



"MISSOURI AIRMAN'S 30 MINUTE BATTLE FINISHES SIX NAZIS

London, A. P. Major James H. Howard, 6 foot 4 inch Missourian, was identified Tuesday night as the Mustang pilot who dived alone into a swarm of 30 enemy fighters over Germany during the big raid on Oscherleben last Tuesday. He bagged a probable total of six enemy planes in thirty minutes of spectacular dogfighting. . . This headline appeared in the nation's newspapers on Wednesday, January 19, 1944.

Major Howard needs no introduction. Well known in the Pacific, where he was a member of the Flying Tigers, he transferred into the 354th Group to continue his career as fighter pilot par excellence. No need introducing "Ding Hao!" It may be found in the form of a plastic miniature in hobby stores across the land.

From left to right:

W N. EMMER
LT. RIDDEL
LT. PARSONS
J. G. BURKE
D. M. BEERBOWER
G. T. EAGLESTON
C. M. FRANTZ



GATHERING OF THE ACES...

Top photo: "... Lieutenant Redfern, one of the fine, young aggressive pilots of my Squadron, the 356th, who contributed much to our success as a fighter unit. . ."

Center photo: Lt. Bill "Perk" Perkins and on the right Lt. Robert L. Shoup. Bob Shoup made the Group's first confirmed kill in January of 1944 when he shot down a Junkers Ju88. He became an "ace" and was credited with 5.5 victories.

Bottom photo: Lt. Bart Tenore reading in his cockpit while awaiting instructions for take-off the night before D-Day. He was another fine fighter pilot who was tragically killed in an aircraft accident after returning to the States.



An interesting event in the career of Lt. Col. Turner follows below:

"... We had a Mustang named 'The Stars Look Down'. This Mustang was a war weary ship that had been retired from active combat. It was stripped of its fuselage tank; in it's place we had installed a rear seat. It was in this plane that General Dwight Eisenhower rode as a passenger with General Pete Quesada at the controls to fly a personal reconnaissance sortie over the St. Lo area. This was prior to initiating the major offensive known as the St. Lo Breakthrough. I led the sweep under the guise of a regular patrol of my 356th Squadron. Hence the name 'The Stars Look Down'.

It proved to be the biggest sweat job mission that I flew, and it had a humorous but embarrassing twist for me. It developed due to a unique progression of circumstances. I had a mandatory abort thrust upon me in the critical portion of the mission. I had to abruptly leave the 'Big Wheels' abandoned in the enemy sky without ceremony or possible explanation due to the high priority for secrecy concerning their presence.

I had the choice of staying with the flight and developing a flaming aircraft, which was sure to attract the attention of enemy aircraft, or just balling out of the area without hesitation or announcement. This in order to attract the attention of enemy fighters that were snooping in another area. And, at this particular time, potential loss of the Supreme Commander was unthinkable at any cost; including me! Fortunately for me, all turned out well. . ."





"Black Knight" would be the appropriate name for Lieutenant James Edwards, an ex-Royal Canadian Air Force pilot. Patiently waiting in his cockpit at the Maidstone strip for take-off instructions the night before D-Day. Lt. Edwards escorted paratroopers to the drop zone.



Captain Harry Fisk, before an escort mission, at Boxted, England in 1943. Captain Fisk was credited with five victories. A classmate in Flight Training with Lt. Col. Turner, Harry Fisk is on active duty as a Colonel and is Deputy C. O. of Peterson Field in Colorado Springs.



Another fine shot of Jim Howard's "Ding Hao!" being prepared for its next assignment.



Another version of "Short Fuse Sallee" with "Tommy" Clint Thompson who was Lt. Col. Turner's crew chief throughout his combat career.



Lieutenant Redfern on the wing of "My Pet". This ship later crashed, taking the life of Lt. Tyner during a training flight.



Oops . . . Folded gear incident at Maidstone, England. "The Prodigal Son" was usually flown by Lt. Bart Tenore. Accidents of this sort contributed to the high wastage of aircraft in the E. T. O. The Mustang was not, however, the great offender in this manner that some other fighters were.

The scene on the right is so typical of the activities at the Boxted Base in England in the winter of 1943. Long range support missions required the use of wing tanks. Shown from left to right are Corporal John Miller holding tank (empty, of course!), Lt. Harry Fisk, unknown Polish airman, Lt. Robert Goodnight and Witold Lanowski, another Pole serving in the Group.



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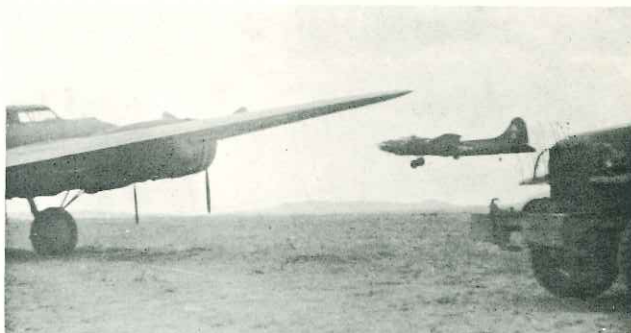
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Proudly wearing the Distinguished Flying Cross, which has just been awarded, are from left to right: Eagleston, Beer-bower, Stephens, Howard, Bradley, Meserve and Edwards. A proud moment in the life of a fighter pilot. . .



"... The Russian General and Colonel were visiting VIPs at the beachhead Strip A-2 where we were stationed. Our Fighter Wing Commander, General Pete Quesada, had brought them to us at their request to see the "Miraculous Mustangs" they had heard so much about. Col. George Bickel and myself were showing them the fighters on the line of my Squadron, the 356th. . .".

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... I just read your "Air Combat 1939-1945" which I received from a friend. It's tops! I have enclosed a photo of a Brazilian Air Force B-17 which could very well illustrate your note on the B-17 in issue 3 in a future issue of your magazine. This photo was taken by my close friend Francisco Pereira Netto ...

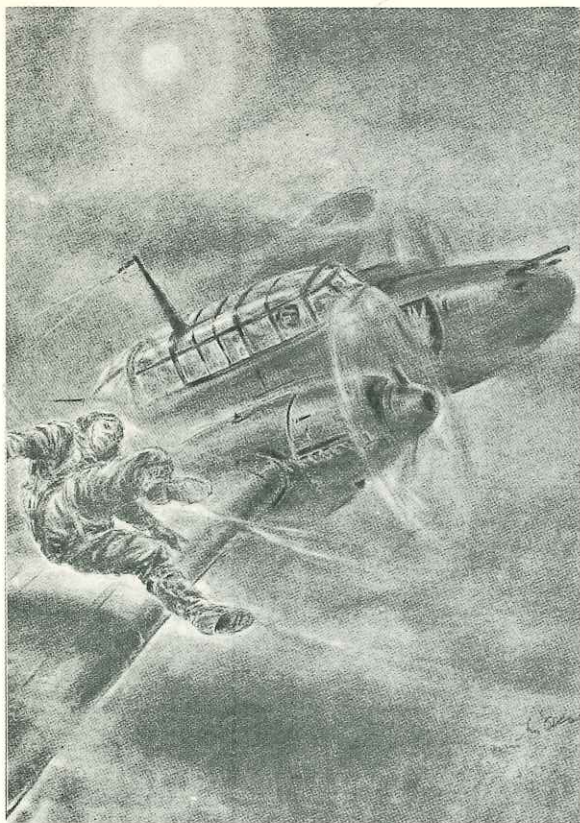
Jose Ribeiro de Mendonca
Rio de Janeiro, Brasil.

... During a recent holiday trip through Switzerland I was very much surprised to discover, in the outskirts of the town of St. Gallen, an almost intact B-17. It was surrounded by a solid fence and guarded by a rather aggressive dog. Through a hole in the fence I took the accompanying photograph which I had to put together from two separate prints as I was too close to get a total view. The aircraft was only slightly damaged and, although weather-beaten, showed many traces of its original paintwork. The serial 238160 was still clearly visible on the tail section. Possibly this is one of the last B-17s surviving unchanged since it came down in 1944 or 1945.

Can you or your Swiss correspondent throw some light on the history of this particular airplane? . . .

Harold Thiele,
Goeppingen, W. Germany





Our reader, Peter Cocchio from West Babylon, N. Y., forwards us this fine picture of a Thunderbolt of the 22nd Squadron, 36th Fighter Group in which he served. The shot was taken in Le Culot, Belgium in March, 1945.

Suddenly...

"One of my easier, and relatively unexciting, assignments as a fighter pilot was keeping an eye on stragglers returning from bombing missions over Germany during the summer of 1942. Cruising in my 110, I sometimes found these stragglers, mainly Wellingtons, Whitleys and Stirlings, up to 100 miles away from the main stream. Besides disliking these types of missions for the routine they had become, I've always felt a kind of pity for the defenseless, helpless bomber crew, trying to reach home in an aircraft often already shredded by flak and cannon fire. If they did make it home, they deserved to. No match for my faster, better armed 110, I'd often close in, examine the aircraft and simply fire a few rounds in their general direction. In some cases, the bomber crew did not even pretend to counter my fire but evacuated immediately. This suited me fine. Only if machine gun fire answered my initial rounds did I pursue the bomber. Perhaps my feelings and behavior were somewhat unorthodox but it allowed me to live with myself.

It was precisely during one of these 'just routine' assignments that I was to witness one of the most startling sights in my entire career. The night was quiet with a full moon above. I had been patrolling the southern flank in an area below the Ruhr Valley. Flashes from bursting bombs and exploding aircraft over the city of Kassel seemed close, although it was well over 100 miles away. Their mission completed, the large R. A. F. bomber stream was now returning to England. The gunner behind me reported no sightings. Flying at cruise speed we seemed alone in the vast emptiness.

Suddenly, approaching at phenomenal speed, oxygen hoses flapping and parachute pack intact, an airman fell straight through the heavens toward the earth below barely missing the starboard wing of my fighter. For one split second I looked into the frightened airman's face. Never will I forget the shocked and terrified expression I read there.

Recovering, after what seemed like hours, my baffled gunner and I scanned the skies and still there were no visual sightings. Just the dark and quiet night. Enough for this evening. We had already shot down a Wellington sometime earlier. We landed. But the mystery airman made it safely to the ground ahead of us. His parachute had opened in the black night below. His heavily damaged bomber continued on its way home to England, with one crew member less . . ."

Obit. P. z. L. W.



Letters to the Editor....

Dear Editor,

"On page 100 of your last issue is a photograph of a C-47. However, something struck me that this is incorrect. Digging into my own files I discovered that this is not a C-47. The photo is really a gem, because the type depicted is rarely illustrated. This is one of the only sixteen C-48Bs, a version of the civil Douglas DST "Sleeper", impressed into USAAF service. Distictive features, in contrast with the normal C-47: lack of astro-dome on top of cockpit, D. F. loop under the nose and three air slits on each side of the fuselage above the windows. The last feature was found only on the DST "Sleeper"."

Bernhard Klein,
Midland Park, N. J.

Dear Editor,

... Just a note of interest for your readers may be the fact that up until about a year or so ago there was a P-47N Thunderbolt present at the San Juan airport in Puerto Rico. It appeared to belong to the National Guard and had a checkerboard cowl. In the numerous publications that I have read on the remaining P-47s, this one was never mentioned. I have no idea what has happened to it now. I would be very interested to find out if any of your readers has any knowledge of where it is now. Also, unknown to reader Ralph Maffel who reported a B-25 in St. Croix, there is another one located there which is in terrible condition. There are also three more located at the San Juan Airport . . .

Joseph Mingolla,
Mount Hermon, Massachussets.

From all parts of the country we receive photographs which were taken by ex-servicemen stationed throughout the world. Thanks to our contributors, we are able to show seven different German aircraft types in this issue. In general, the situation is the same; damaged German aircraft found along highways, in blown-up hangars or at the edge of former Luftwaffe bases.

Each photo, however, has a story to tell; way-out markings, alien surroundings, or rare breads. Keep them coming! We very much appreciate the effort involved.

Dear Editor,

... I am sending some photographs from my personal collection. Top photo — 1 — shows some captured aircraft near Munich. The picture, taken late June 1945, shows a Junkers Ju52 and also a radar equipped Junkers Ju88.

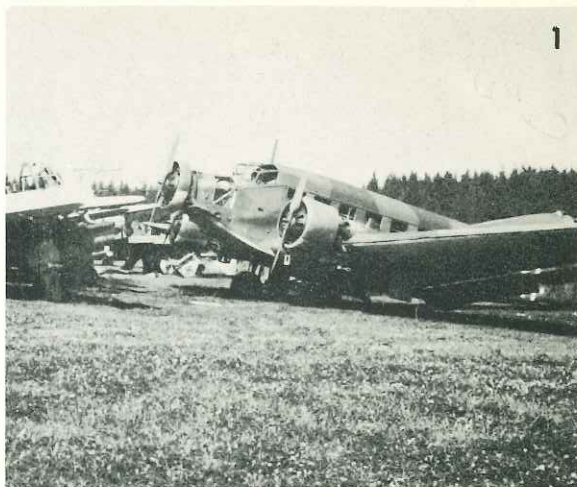
Photo 2 is of a Siebel Si204D. This one will never fly again. . .

F. J. "Rick" Tyson
Greenville, Texas

Dear Sir,

... I am enclosing two unpublished photographs. Photos were taken at war's end by Cpl. Anthony Sinen, U. S. Infantry. The Messerschmitt Me262 — photo 3 — had already been pretty well stripped by our Intelligence people as was the damaged Junkers Ju 290A — photo 4 — with nose blown off. . .

Douglas W. Thoma
Monroe, Michigan





Dear Editor,

... I am sending you some pictures I wrote to you about a while ago. As you can see from the photographs it is near the end of the war. The top picture is of a Messerschmitt Bf 110 nightfighter which was abandoned together with a number of other fighters and bombers. The Autobahn going into Munich was used as a runway for these planes. The grass strip, which normally separated the four lanes, was cemented in and then painted green. The bottom picture was taken at an airdrome near Mannheim. The number on the fin of this Fw190 is, I believe, 428372. . .

Lance Maresh
Syracuse, Indiana

Dear Editor.

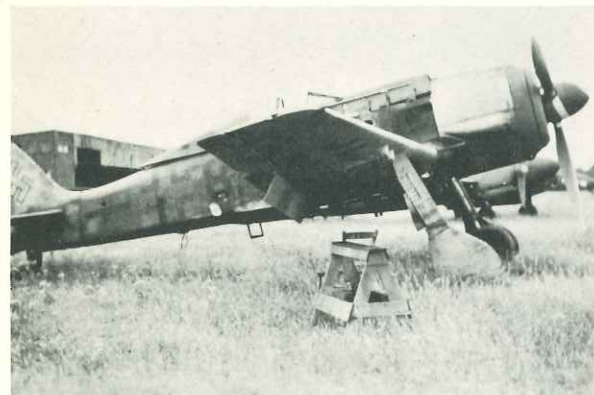
I am enclosing for your inspection some photographs just to whet your appetite. Can you imagine finding such a bonanza in your back yard? I must have literally hundreds of photographs of aircraft, airfields, hangars, Russian generals, bombed-out buildings, wrecks, etc. You name it, I have it.

Interestingly enough, when I took a picture of an airplane, I usually took three or four such as the one of the Junkers Ju 88 night fighter. (see two photographs on the next page of the Junkers and of the Messerschmitt 262. Ed.)

Most of them are very well documented. . .

Peter J. Sala
East Orange, N. J.

Editors note: We have seen some of the photographs of Mr. Sala and they are just great! We hope to show more of these in our next issue of "Air Combat". Included in his collection was a fine picture of Glen T. Eagleston's P-51.



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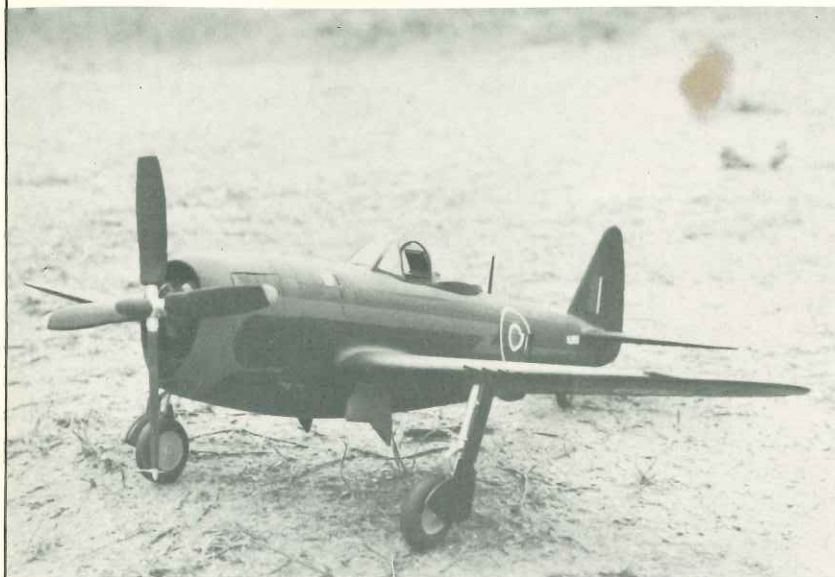
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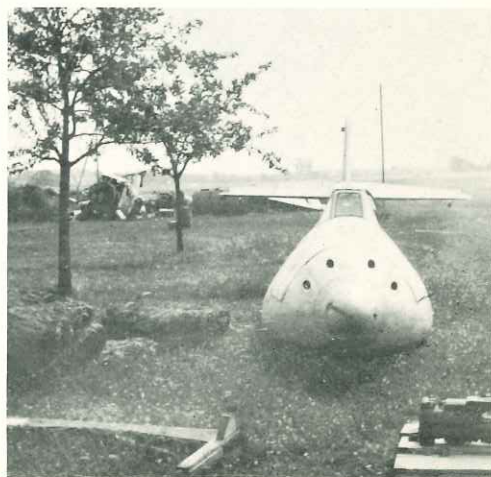
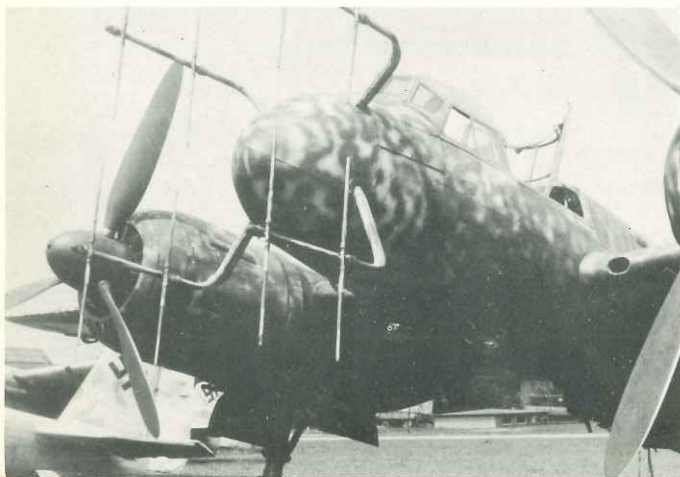
RICHARD MARMO

Revell's kit of the Republic P-47D-25-RE Thunderbolt is another welcome addition to their 1/32 line. While generally accurate in outline, the kit suffers from some of the worst quality control (or lack of it) to appear in years. There is considerable flash throughout and it is so heavy in areas that it is difficult to determine where the parts leave off and the flash begins. The fit of parts also causes some problems, especially toward the bottom of the firewall where some trimming will be needed.

While having its shortcomings, this kit can be made into an excellent replica. The kit markings are for a rather blah 12th Air Force machine based in Corsica. In addition, the blue of the U. S. insignia is too light.

The photograph shows an all-black machine of the No. 73 Fighter Operational Training Unit, R. A. F., based in Fayid during 1944. The serial number is KJ348 in white, red cowl and fuselage stripe, and 36 inch diameter type C.1 roundels in all six positions. The cost of this kit is \$3.00.

Reference: Flying Review International, Volume 19, number 3. Richard Marmo, I. P. M. S. No. 2



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SAVING THE THUNDER BOLT
IN 1945, THE B-29

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